

**A WESTERN RANGE EXTENSION FOR THE SKINK SAIPHOS EQUALIS.** *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 48(1): 92. 2002:- The fossorial skink *Saiphos equalis* occurs on the coast and adjacent ranges of southern NSW northward to extreme SE Queensland (Cogger, 2000). Wilson & Knowles (1992) defined the Queensland range as extending to Kroombit Tops and noted that the species becomes increasingly altitude-dependent in the north of its range. Specimen records from the Queensland Museum indicate that the specimens were collected at locations on the Great Dividing Range, its spurs and associated subcoastal ranges. The majority of records are from the Border Ranges and Granite Belt regions, but they extend as far north as Kroombit Tops and west to the Bunya Mountains. The Dept of Natural Resources Forestry database contains records for Diamondy State Forest, on the Great Dividing Range NW of the Bunya Mountains (M. Mathieson pers. comm.). Sorley (1997) referred to the species in the Chinchilla area, but I have been unable to find the original source of this record - the species may be present in forests on the nearby ranges.

I captured a *Saiphos equalis* on 9 March 2001 during flora and fauna surveys of a proposed nature refuge on 'Oakwells', west of Injune. 'Oakwells' is a cattle grazing property located on the Great Dividing Range, just N of Mt Hutton. The capture site was an area of basalt scree, vegetated with dry vine forest, on the steep upper slopes of Main Top at 25°45'05"S, 148°16'29"E and approximately 840m altitude. The skink was located under loose rock infilled with leaf mulch and humus. The specimen is lodged with the Queensland Museum (QMJ76305).

'Oakwells' is about 270km NW of Chinchilla and about 320km WNW of Diamondy State Forest, thus representing a considerable extension westward of the known range of this skink. The question arises whether this record represents an isolated population or whether the distribution is continuous along the Great Dividing Range. To the north of Injune, the Great Dividing Range meets the extensive uplands of the Carnarvon and Expedition Ranges. These uplands have been described as 'islands' in the mesotherm archipelago of Nix (1993). More temperate conditions here are associated with outlier or relict populations of Bassian herpetofaunal

elements more typical of SE Australia. Examples known to occur in the Carnarvon Ranges are the frog *Adelotis brevis*, the skinks *Calyptotis scutirostrum*, *Ctenotus arcamus* and *Egernia cunninghamii* and the elapid snake *Notechis scutatus* (Craig Eddie, QPWS, pers. comm.). *Saiphos equalis* could be another such relict species, but to date has not been located in fauna surveys of the national parks of the area. It would be useful to confirm *Saiphos equalis* in the Chinchilla area. Some fauna surveys have been carried out in Barakula State Forest, which straddles the Great Dividing Range to the north of Chinchilla (M. Mathieson, L. Hogan pers. comm.). To date, the species has not been found there. More surveys, perhaps targeting the more mesic habitats, are needed to define the western limits of the range of this cryptic lizard.

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